



The coin may be the most beautiful ever minted in the U.S.

Beat Siskel prize

2 sides to every coin —and gold is just one

By Roger Boye

THE GRAND PRIZE for beating Gene Siskel — a Saint-Gaudens \$20 gold piece — easily rates a "10" with collectors.

For decades, hobby buffs have praised the \$20 "double eagle" as an artistic masterpiece, possibly the most beautiful coin ever minted by the United States government. Never before had Miss Liberty been designed in such splendor.

"There's been nothing like it since the days of the ancient Greeks," declared President Theodore Roosevelt in 1907, the year the coin was first produced. Roosevelt — a well-known coin enthusiast — did have a small gripe, however. He objected to the use of the words "In God We Trust" on the tails side of the coin, insisting that they were "a sacrilegious advertisement for God."

But almost no one complained about Miss Liberty, who is shown on the coin holding a torch and olive branch, symbols for freedom and peace.

The heads-side design also includes two unusual elements, the U.S. Capitol building near Miss Liberty's feet, and 46 stars — one for each state in the Union in 1907. Saint-Gaudens depicted an eagle in full flight on the tails side.

Most appropriately, The Tribune's uncirculated specimen is dated 1928, the year that Paramount Pictures released the film "Wings." It was the first movie to win an Oscar for best picture. The Oscar statuette also was designed in 1928.

Who will win the awards for 1980? If you beat Siskel, you could use your prize to buy \$20 worth of groceries or take a friend to see the latest movie in town. Although the government last minted gold coins in 1933, they are still "legal tender."

Of course, you wouldn't want to spend the gold piece since it contains nearly an ounce of pure gold and also has additional "collector's value." In late March, for example, with gold selling for about \$500 an ounce, Chicago coin dealers were asking from \$700 to \$1,000 for a Saint-Gaudens gold piece similar to the grand-prize coin.

If the price of gold should plummet, the Beat Siskel winner will be well protected with a second prize made of silver — an uncirculated 1928 dollar minted in San Francisco.

As other silver dollars, the 1928-S contains about three-quarters of an ounce of pure silver and a small amount of copper. But the 1928-S is a rare collectors' item in uncirculated condition, with such coins retailing for \$250 and more.



Tribune photos by Ron Bailey

This uncirculated 1928 silver dollar can retail for \$250 and up.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE Arts & Fun—April 6, 1980